



PRESS RELEASE

Over 250,000 Europeans call on EU Commission to radically reform EU agriculture

Nicosia, 3 May 2017

Today a clear and strong message reached the European Commission: the EU's agricultural policy needs to be radically changed. This is what 258,708 citizens and 600 civil society organisations and businesses have told the Commission in the largest EU public consultation on agricultural policy, which closed yesterday (2 May).

The large mobilisation was generated by [Living Land](#), the online campaign launched by WWF, Birdlife Europe and the European Environmental Bureau, calling for an EU agricultural policy that protects our climate and environment, is fair for farmers and consumers, and contributes to healthy and sustainable food production. 258,708 people and 600 organisations and businesses representing consumers, the food sector, drinking water providers, and those promoting environmental protection, development, health, and animal welfare joined 'Living Land'.

BirdLife Cyprus participated in this EU-wide campaign as part of our ongoing effort to support truly sustainable and wildlife-friendly agriculture, in a CAP system that benefits small producers and rural communities instead of industrial, environmentally-damaging, farming.

Ariel Brunner, Senior Head of Policy, Birdlife Europe & Central Asia said:

"Hundreds of thousands of people from across Europe have demanded action. With this mandate, the Commission must now respond with an ambitious new policy that will restore the biodiversity that is disappearing across the continent. The time is now to transition to sustainable farming. At a time when faith in the European Union is on the decline, the Commission must listen to this major signal from the citizens of Europe and respond convincingly."

Jabier Ruiz, Senior Policy Officer on Agriculture and Sustainable Food Systems at WWF European Policy Office, said:

"The message is clear: Europeans care about farming, food and nature and they do not want their food to be produced at the cost of nature. They want their public money to be invested in a different agricultural model that serves sustainable farmers and rural communities, and does not destroy our finite natural resources and species. We will see whether the European Commission is at the level of its mandate delivering a new policy that supports a truly sustainable food and farming system for the future."

Pieter de Pous, EEB EU Policy Director, said:

"If the EU is to reinvent itself, face up to the major challenges of climate change, ecosystem collapse and fixing a broken food and farming system, a root and branch reform of the CAP – its oldest, most

controversial and least-efficient common policy – is not only long overdue, it is inevitable. First we need clarity on what a future farm subsidy system should do, only then can talks on EU budget figures start.”

The EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which takes up almost 40% of the EU budget, is a major driver of unsustainable farming in Europe, as it continues to stimulate industrial food production that causes environmental degradation. Unsustainable agriculture is the single biggest driver of biodiversity loss in Europe, causing the depletion of species like farm birds and bees. Evidence shows that our rural areas have lost over 58% of their farm birds, and 24% of European bumblebees are threatened by extinction, with huge economic losses associated. The CAP also fails to address the needs of rural areas: between 2007 and 2013, about 20% of jobs in the farming sector have been lost, with more and more small farmers being put out of business.

The European Commission is expected to present the results of the public consultation publicly in a Conference in Brussels on 7 July and to publish a communication on the future of the CAP before the end of 2017. The new EU Common Agricultural Policy should be implemented in all Member States by 2021.

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Notes to editors:

1. [BirdLife Cyprus](#) is a registered, non-governmental, not-for-profit organisation (NGO) that dedicates itself to the conservation of wild birds and their habitats in Cyprus. It was formed in 2003 through the merge of the two Cyprus Ornithological Societies and now has offices in Strakka, Nicosia comprised by professional staff.
2. [BirdLife Europe and Central Asia](#) is a **partnership of 48 national conservation organisations** and a **leader in bird conservation**. Through its unique local to global approach BirdLife Europe delivers high impact and long term conservation for the benefit of nature and people. BirdLife Europe and Central Asia is one of the six regional secretariats that compose BirdLife International.
3. The **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)** is the integrated agricultural policy of the European Union, setting out all the rules and mechanisms that regulate the production, trade and processing of agricultural products in all Member States. It is one of the most powerful policy tools within and outside Europe, which absorbs a very large part of EU budget (around 35%). Therefore, the practices promoted by the CAP have a direct impact on many aspects of the economy, the society and our environment.
4. New study shows greening measure to protect nature on farms will be environmentally ineffective
http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/birdlife_europe_eeb_press_release_28_11_2016.pdf
5. New study explores possibilities for a better CAP
http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/birdlife_europe_press_release_07_11_2016.pdf